1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

553 Schebesta reports that the child is not named for some weeks after birth. To name a boy is the father's prerogative or that of the oldest male members of his lineage; to name a girl is the right of the mother or her oldest relatives. There is no uniform custom, except that naming is primarily the privilege of the parents.

844 846 [114] 847 It is a Pygmy custom to fasten the umbilical cord to the child's elbow and later to bury it in some swamp. Schebesta found no evidence of the truth of Johnston's statement (1902, 1904, 539) that Pygmy women sever the umbilical cord with their teeth. Abortion is known to the Pygmies, but plays no part in marital life.

Twins

845 847 The birth of twins, among the archers, seems to be considered abnormal and inauspicious. Schebesta frequently heard that following the birth of twins one had died. He was told by an elder that, when twins are born, the elders are immediately informed, and they advise that if both infants are strong and healthy they be allowed to live, otherwise the weaker of the two should be killed. The mother herself smothers the infant by covering its nose and mouth with her hand. The body is immediately buried in the house, which is promptly abandoned.

[P. 178-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[P. 198-C]

Dances are organized by the women to celebrate the birth of twins, whether or not both live. Schebesta (1948, 409) mentions the fact that, although the neighboring village tribes have similar feelings about abnormal births, they content themselves with evading unhappy consequences by magical dances and other rites. Schebesta (1948, 409) suggests that superstitious terror and fear of attendant sanctions drive the Pygmy mother to the more violent way of avoiding danger. He writes that all abnormal infants are also put to death immediately following birth, either by the mother or by her female attendants; the men are never permitted to see these monsters. They too are buried in the house, which is immediately abandoned.

845 [535]

845 847

Postnatal Care

The mother surrounds her child with every care and attention until she again becomes pregnant, and even subsequently if the child is not yet able to look after itself to some extent.

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1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.222-C]

Far less important than disease or accidental death is animal hostility—elephants, buffalo, and leopards being the major sources of danger. It is extremely rare for any Pygmy to be killed by one of these animals. The net-hunting Mbuti have effective medicines against poisonous snakes.

For most illnesses, says Putnam, the Pygmy can find a local remedy. For stomach upsets and diarrhea an enema (a hollow reed with a gourd gummed to one end) is administered, with the use of vegetable decoctions containing *gorogoro* bark for the former complaint, and *tebvo* liana for the latter. These enemas are also used to produce abortions. For ailments that they are unable to cure and that are foreign to them, some may seek the help of a villager witch doctor, though Mbuti opinion varies as to their efficiency.

Death, then, is accepted as just as natural a phenomenon as birth, and the body is accorded little ritual respect. There are, unlike Schebesta's account for the archers, cited examples of wailing. The following instances taken from the notes of Anne Putnam illustrate its extent.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

inch thick, packed tight. The top layer of dry leaves and kindling are soaked with oil and set on fire. The fire is kept going for about four hours, then the patient is taken out and hot leaves are applied. This treatment may be followed by hot baths, scarification and insertion of herbal medicine into the wounds, and resting on a bed, but none of this is said to be absolutely necessary. 757

A young man, given to being seized with trembling fits, is calmed by having incisions on his stomach rubbed with a black powder. A liquid is poured down his nose from a leaf funnel.

A certain type of bark, *ikanya*, extremely poisonous, is used to procure an abortion by making a decoction from it and giving it to the pregnant woman to inhale. It appears that even inhaling the dry bark might be effective, but is not certainly so. 847 278 824

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

effective. The only indication of band interest in birth is the prohibition against married women procuring abortions, which are known and sometimes practiced among the unmarried girls, though rarely.

As far as the nuclear family is concerned the event arouses considerable happiness, and the mother's female age mates may gather with her to sing a few *elima* songs to celebrate the blessing of motherhood; a childless woman is regarded as the most unfortunate of beings. A few of the younger youths may show some interest, as the new child will before long become their responsibility for protection and instruction. After a few days, when the child is brought freely into the open, the hunters and elders will fondle it and compliment the parents. The father is as proud as the mother, and just as likely to carry the child around to show it off.

Medical precautions are minimal. The mother is likely to be off on the hunt, or on the trail somewhere when birth takes place; there is no lessening of activity for her during pregnancy. Childbirth is said to be effected easily, with complications only rarely happening. Any woman may act as midwife; the father should not be present. If there is delay the expectant mother may be massaged to help delivery, or she may be brought away from the camp into the forest, and sat close to a tree against which she pulls with a vine rope. Within two hours of delivery, if birth took place in the camp, the mother is apt to appear in the doorway of her hut, with a bundle wrapped in bark cloth held in her arms. Within the same period of time, if birth took place on the trail, she will continue her journey.

Although the father is not present at the birth in person, it must be one of his arrow blades, or formerly a wooden or leaf knife made by him, that will cut the umbilical cord. The blade is kept with the cord until the child is old enough to make a bundle of them both, take them to a stream and bury them where they will get carried away by the next flood waters.

There is also knowledge of a custom of couvade, though I did not find anyone who had practiced it. If the birth is slow, the father takes off all his clothes and his sister-in-law washes and rubs him. She then goes to the place of labor, and when the child is born returns to the father, who must make a token gift before he can clothe himself again.

The father, and the mother's brother, if he is in the camp, cut special vines daily and sprinkle their juices over both the baby and the mother, "to make them strong." Some of these vines contain so much

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

846 751 juice that when cut they have to be bent, with both ends upward so that the liquid will not be lost. Sometimes they are cut into chunks and soaked in water that is used for washing the infant.

856 A third precaution that is taken is to tie a vine bracelet around one of the infant's wrists, or around his waist. A small piece of wood may be roughly threaded to the vine, and the stated function is again to give the infant strength, except that with specific reference to the wood, it is frequently said that it "gives the child the strength of the forest."

844 845 778 With regard to preferences among the women as to where they give birth, it varies. But there is unanimity that if there is any difficulty at all, then the right thing to do is to go off away from the camp and into the forest, which will "help." The forest appears quite 778 755 751 856 clearly as helper and protector in the vine and wooden medicines and charms, and in the scarification that will take place at the first sign of sickness. Even with adults this is done: the skin is cut in a number of small slits with an arrow, and some of the flesh is gouged out. The ashes prepared from forest woods and plants are made into a paste with spittle and rubbed into the wounds. When the skin grows back, the black ash is still visible beneath, and is regarded as a source of the strength and health and happiness that derive from the forest.

846 Both parents are under food restrictions until the baby is old enough to crawl, the main one and the only general one being that they must not eat meat. The father may go hunting, but any meat that falls into his net is divided among the others. More often he stays away from the hunt, sending his net out with some youth. However, somewhere between one and two months after birth, and when the family net has made a particularly successful catch, the father will usually announce that he is eating meat again.

853 The only other restriction placed on the nuclear family by the crisis of birth is the restraint placed on the father, who is forbidden to have sexual intercourse with the mother as long as she is breast-feeding 853 the child. The restriction is quite definitely linked by the Mbuti to 845 the supply of milk, which is also given as the reason for their rather mild aversion to twins. I know of no record of twins who both survived into adulthood, and it is stated that one of them invariably [847] dies. It is also stated that no woman would feed a child at each breast, and I understand that if twins are born, one is simply not fed by the mother, and is taken away and buried by her friends. But there is no fear of twins, and no ritual in connection with their birth or death.